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Notes on the Dialect of the People of Newfoundland.

BY REV. G. PATTERSON, D. D., LL. D., 1824-1897.  
NEW GLASGOW, N. S.

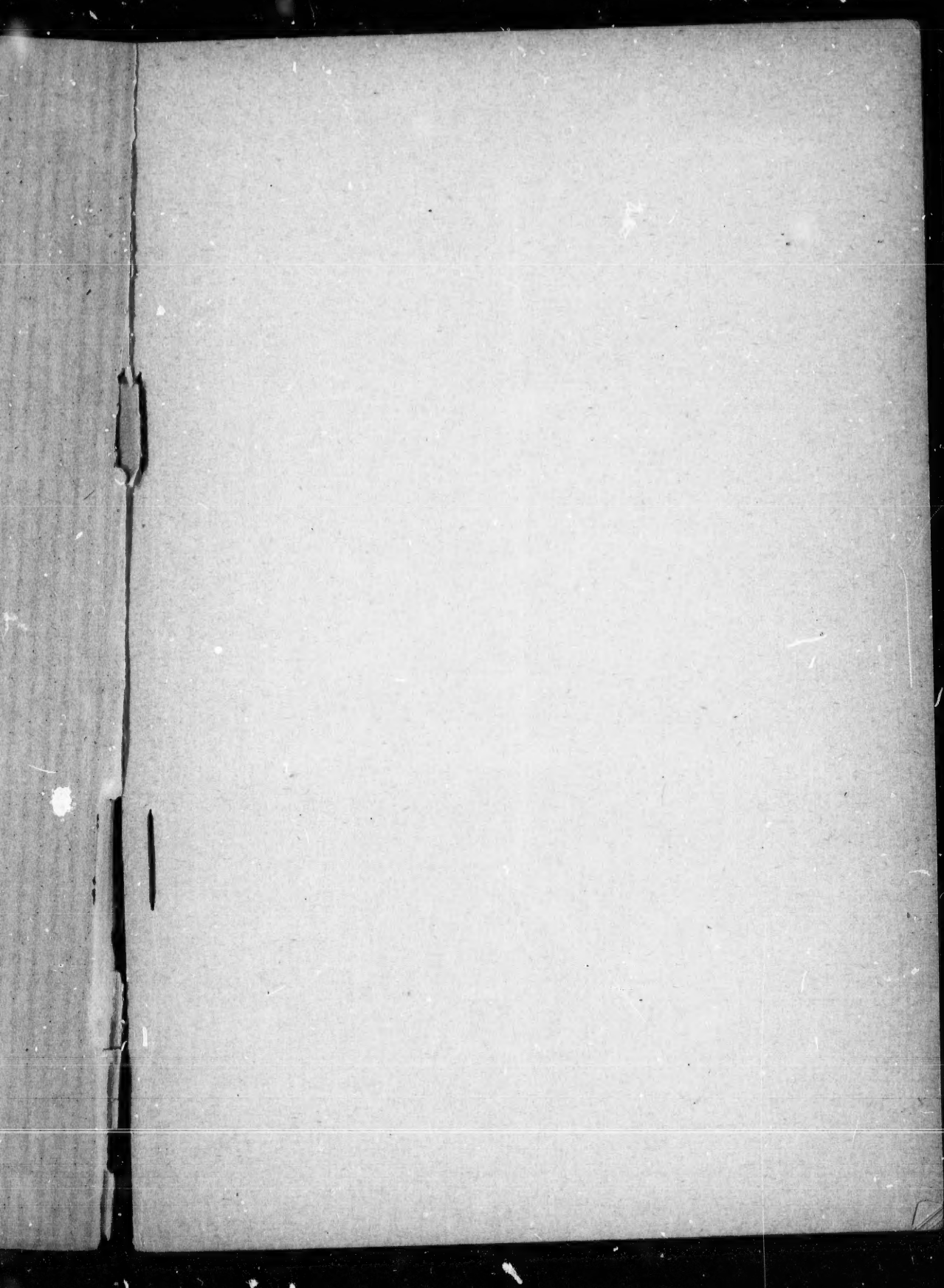
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## SPECIAL MEETING.

*Legislative Council Chamber, Halifax, 27th April, 1896.*

The PRESIDENT in the Chair.

REV. G. PATTERSON, D. D., LL. D., of New Glasgow, N. S., having been invited by the Council to address the Institute on his investigations in relation to the Folk-speech of Newfoundland, in order that the attention of members of the Institute might be directed to this kind of research, read the following paper :--

NOTES ON THE DIALECT OF THE PEOPLE OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND.

Of late years Folk-lore, by which is meant popular superstitions, tales, traditions and legends, has engaged a large amount of attention, and is now universally recognized as of great value in the study of anthropology and comparative religion. Closely connected with this is the study of folk-speech, or the words and linguistic forms of the common people, as distinguished from the literary language of the cultured classes. These, though the consideration of them may be regarded as more properly belonging to the science of philology, are yet also of interest as connected with the history and migrations, the beliefs and modes of life of the peoples among whom they are found.

Hitherto, in Nova Scotia, attention has scarcely been directed to either of these subjects. I know of no systematic attempt either to gather up the folk-lore or to discuss the linguistic peculiarities of our people. And yet we have an ample field. Our original settlers were principally French, German, English, Irish, Lowland Scotch, and Celtic,

with some intermixture of North American Indians and Africans, and other elements in less proportion. These all brought with them various folk-tales, legends and superstitions, and as these different races remain in a large measure distinct, they retain them to a good degree still. As they mix with other races and become more educated, they may lose them, but often the intermixture tends to their wider extension. In the same way there arises an interchange of words and phrases, which form dialectic peculiarities more or less widely spread according to circumstances.

Recently my attention was directed to the folk-lore and folk-speech of Newfoundland. I had not more than begun to mingle with her people till I observed them using words in a sense different from what I had ever heard elsewhere. This was the case to some extent in the speech of the educated, in their law proceedings and in the public press, but was of course more marked among the uneducated. Among the latter particularly I found, in addition, words in use which were entirely new to me. Further intercourse convinced me that these peculiarities presented an interesting subject of study, and after some enquiry I prepared two papers, the first of which was read before the Montreal branch of the American Folk-lore Society, and published in the *American Folk-lore Journal* for January-March, 1895, and the other was read before that society at their late meeting and published in the same journal. It has been thought desirable that the results of my enquiries should be brought under the notice of Nova Scotian students, and I have therefore consented to condense my two papers into one adding such additional information as I have since received and to present it before the Institute of Science.

It may seem strange that I should have directed such particular attention to the dialectic forms of Newfoundland, where I was quite a stranger, while there remains a similar field in Nova Scotia quite uncultivated. But it was just because I was a stranger that my ear at once caught the sound of unusual words, or of words used in unusual senses, and I was led to these investigations. Equally interesting forms of speech are perhaps to be found in Nova Scotia, but they await the investigations perhaps of some stranger who may come to sojourn among us.

In explanation of the origin of these peculiarities it is to be kept in view that the most of the original settlers of Newfoundland came either

from Ireland or the west of England. In consequence the present generation very generally speak with an Irish accent, and some words or phrases will be found in use of Irish origin. Their coasts too, having been from a very early period frequented by fishermen of all nations, and their trade bringing them in contact with people of other tongues, we might expect foreign words to be introduced into their speech. The accessions to their vocabulary from these sources, however, are few, and their language remains almost entirely English. Even the peculiarities which strike a stranger, are often survivals of old forms which are wholly or partially obsolete elsewhere.\*

I. I notice words which are genuinely English, but are now obsolete elsewhere or are only locally used :—

*An atomy* or a *natomy*, a skeleton, applied to a person or creature extremely emaciated. "Poor John is reduced to an *atomy*." This is a contraction of the word anatomy, probably from a mistake of persons supposing the *a* or *an* to be the article. This use agrees with the original meaning of the word, which was not the act of dissecting, but the object or body to be dissected, and hence as the flesh was removed, the skeleton, a word which then denoted a *dried* body or mummy. (Greek, *skello*, to dry.)

Oh tell me, friar, tell me  
In what part of this vile *anatomy*  
Doth my name lodge? Tell me that I may sack  
The hateful mansion.

—Shakspeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, III, 3.

Hence it came to denote a person extremely emaciated.

They brought one Pinch, a hungry lean faced villain,  
A mere *anatomy*,  
A living dead man.

—*Comedy of Errors*, V, 1.

Shakspeare also used the abridged form *atomy* in the same sense, which is exactly the Newfoundland meaning of the word.

"Thou starved bloodhound . . . thou *atomy*, thou."

—2 *Henry IV*, V, 4.

The same is given by Jamieson† as in use in Lowland Scotch.

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\* In these investigations I must especially acknowledge the assistance received from Judge Bennett of Harbor Grace, Newfoundland, who has not only furnished me with a number of words, but has carefully examined the whole list. I have also to acknowledge my obligations to an article by the Rev. Dr. Pilot of St. Johns, published in *Christmas Bells*, a paper issued in that city at Christmas. A few additional facts have been received from Mr. W. C. Earl, of the Western Union Telegraph Company, and others. For most of the quotations I am indebted to the *Encyclopædic Dictionary*.

† Scottish Dictionary.

*Barvel*, sometimes pronounced *barbel*, a tanned sheepskin used by fishermen, and also by splitters, as an apron to keep the legs dry, but since oilskin clothes have come into use, not now generally employed. Wright in his "Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English," marks it as Kentish, denoting "a short leather apron worn by washerwomen or a slabbering bib." Recently I heard of its being used by a fisherman on our Nova Scotia coast, to describe the boot or apron of a sleigh or carriage.

*Barm* is still commonly, if not exclusively used in Newfoundland for yeast, as it is in some parts of England. So *billets*, for small sticks of wood has now, with most English-speaking people, gone out of use. But it is quite usual in Newfoundland to hear of buying or selling *billets*, putting in *billets*, &c. The word, however, seems to have been introduced from the Norman French.

*Brews*.—This is a dish, which occupies almost the same place at a Newfoundlanders breakfast table, that baked beans are supposed to do on that of a Bostonian. It consists of pieces of hard biscuit, soaked over night, warmed in the morning, and then eaten with boiled codfish and butter. This is plainly the old English word usually written *brewis*, and variously explained. Johnson defines it as "a piece of bread soaked in boiling fat pottage made of salted meat." This is about the Newfoundland sense, substituting, as was natural, fish for meat. Webster gives it as from the Anglo-Saxon, and represents it as obsolete in the sense of broth or pottage, "What an ocean of *brewis* shall I swim in," (Beaumont & Fletcher), but as still used to denote "bread soaked in gravy or prepared in water and butter." This is the relative New England dish. Wright gives it in various forms *brewet*, *brewis*, &c., as denoting pottage, but says that in the North of England they still have "a *brewis*, made of slices of bread with fat broth poured over them."

*Child* is used to denote a female child. This is probably going out of use, as gentlemen, who have resided for some time on the island, say they have never heard it, but I am assured by others, that on the occasion of a birth they have heard at once the enquiry, "Is it a boy or a child?" Wright gives it as Devonshire, and it was in use in Shakspeare's time, "Winter's Tale," III, 3, "A boy or a child, I wonder." In two instances I have heard of its being used in this sense some years ago in Nova Scotia. The one was by an old man originally from the United States, who used Shakspeare's enquiry "A boy or a child." Again in a



town settled by New Englanders I am informed by one brought up in it, that when he was a boy some forty years ago, it was a favorite piece of badinage with young people to address a young husband on the birth of his first-born, "Is it a boy or a child?" They did not know the meaning of the phrase, but used it in the way of jeering at his simplicity, as if he had not yet been able to decide the question. This is an example of the manner in which words or phrases, after losing their original meaning, still continue to be used and receive a different sense.

*Clavy* is used to denote a shelf over the mantelpiece. Wright, (Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English,) gives it as denoting the mantelpiece itself, and thus it is still used in architecture. Halliwell, (Dictionary of Archaisms,) gives *clavel*, *clavy*, and *clavel piece* with the same meaning, and *clavel tack*, which he supposes means the shelf over the mantelpiece, the same as the *clavy* of the Newfoundlanders. In French we have *claveau*, the centrepiece of an arch.

*Clean* is universally used in the sense of completely, as frequently in the Authorized Version of the Scriptures (Ps. lxxvii. 8 ; 2 Pet. ii. 18, etc.), and as still in Scotch. "He is *clean* gone off his head." "I am *clean* used up." The word *clear* is sometimes used in the same sense.

*Conkerbills*, icicles formed on the eaves of houses, and the noses of animals. Halliwell gives it in the form of *conkabell*, as Devonshire for an icicle.

*Costive*, costly. "That bridge is a *cos.ive* affair." I had at first supposed this simply the mistake of an ignorant person, but in a tale written in the Norfolk dialect I have seen *costyve* given in this sense, and I am informed that it is used in the same way in other counties of England, and sometimes if not generally pronounced *costeev*.

*Dottrel*, an old fool in his dotage, or indeed a silly person of any age. It is usually spelled *dotterel*, and primarily denoted a bird, a species of plover. From its assumed stupidity, it being alleged to be so fond of imitation that it suffers itself to be caught while intent on mimicking the actions of the fowler, the term came to denote a silly fellow or a dupe.

Our *dotterel* then is caught,

He is, and just

As dotterels used to be ; the lady first

Advanced toward him, stretched forth her wing, and he

Met her with all expressions.

—Old Couplet, iii.



*Dout*, a contraction of "do out," to extinguish, and *douter*, an extinguisher, marked in the dictionaries as obsolete, but noted by Halliwell as still used in various provincial dialects of England.

First, in the intelle t it *douts* the light.—Sylvester  
The dram of base

Doth all the nob'est substance *dout*.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet* i. 4.

Newfoundlanders also express the same idea by the phrase, "*make out the light*."

*Droke*, a sloping valley between two hills. When wood extends across it, it is called a *droke* of wood. In Old Norse there is a noun *dróg*, a streak, also a noun *drag*, a soft slope or valley, which in another form *drog*, is applied to the watercourse down a valley. Similar is the word *drock*, in Provincial English given in Halliwell as in Wiltshire a noun meaning a watercourse, and in Gloucester a verb, to drain with underground stone trenches.

*Drung*, a narrow lane. Wright and Halliwell give it under the form of *drun*, as Wiltshire, with the same signification.

*Dunch cake* or bread, unleavened bread, composed of flour mixed with water and baked at once. So Wright and Halliwell give *dunch dumpling* as in Westmoreland denoting "a plain pudding made of flour and water."

*Dwoll*, a state between sleeping and waking, a dozing. A man will say, "I got no sleep last night, I had only a *dwoll*." This seems kindred to the Scotch word *dwam*, which means swoon. "He is no deid, he is only in a *dwam*." Wright and Halliwell give a similar if not the same word as *dwale*, originally meaning the plant nightshade, then a lethargic disease or a sleeping potion.

*Flankers*, sparks coming from a chimney, so Halliwell gives it as meaning sparks of fire. In old English, when used as a verb, it denotes to sparkle.

"Who can bide the *flanckering* flame  
That still itself betrays?"

—Turbeville's *Ovid*, p. 83.

The noun is generally *flanke* or *flaunke* (Dan. *flunke*) a spark.

"Felle *flaunkes* of fyr and flashes of soufre."

—Early Eng. Allit. Poems, "*Cleanness*," 953.

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*Flaw*, a strong and sudden gust of wind, Norwegian *flage* or *flaag*.  
The word is used by Shakspeare and Milton :

Should patch a wall to expel the winter's *flaw*.—*Hamlet*.  
And snow and hail and stormy gust and *flaw*.—*Paradise Lost*.

And also by Tennyson :

" Like *flaws* in summer laying luty corn."

It is still in use among English seamen.

*Foreright*, an old English word used both as an adjective or an adverb to denote right onward.

" Their sails spread forth and with a *foreright* gale."  
—Massinger, *Renegade*, V.

" Though he *foreright*  
Both by their houses and their persons passed."  
—Chapman, *Homer's Odyssey*, VII.

Hence it came to mean obstinate or headstrong. In Newfoundland it means foolhardy.

*Frore*, for froze or frozen. This is used by Milton :

" The parching air  
Burns *frore* and cold performs the effect of fire."

*Glutch*, to swallow. " My throat is so sore that I cannot *glutch* any thing." Wright and Halliwell give it as old English, in the same sense.

*Gossip*, originally *Godsib*, from *God* and *sib*, meaning kin or relationship by religious obligation, is still quite commonly used in Newfoundland to denote a god-parent. *Sib*, which in old English and Scotch denotes a relative by consanguinity, is used there exclusively to denote relationship formed by sponsorship.

*Groaning cake*. When a birth is expected, a cake is prepared called the *groaning cake*. Very soon after it occurs, with little regard to the feelings or nerves of the mother, a feast is made, particularly for the elderly women, of whom all in the neighbourhood are present. This is called the "*hide-in* feast," and at it the "*groaning cake*" is distributed,—bearing the same relation to the occasion that "*bride-cake*" does to a marriage feast. This is in accordance with the old English practice and language, in which, according to Halliwell, *groaning* denotes lying-in. Hence we have in Scotch *groaning malt*—drink provided for the occasion, and in old English *groaning cheese*, *groaning chair* and *groaning cake*. Judge Bennett supposes that the name of

the feast is only the present participle of *bide*, and means staying or waiting.

*Gulch.* The dictionaries give this word as an obsolete word, which means to swallow ravenously, and Wright gives it as Westmoreland for to swallow. In this sense it is used at Spaniard's Bay, and probably at other places on the coast of Newfoundland. As a noun it is used in other parts of America as denoting a ravine or small hollow. It is also applied to those hollows made by vehicles in snow roads known in Canada as *pitches*. But as a verb, it has come on the Labrador coast, to have a meaning peculiar to that region and to those who frequent it. In summer men, women and children from Newfoundland spend some weeks at the fishing there, living in a very promiscuous way. As there is no tree for shelter for hundreds of miles of islands and shores, parties resort to the hollows for secret indulgence. Hence gulching has, among them, become a synonym for living a wanton life.

*Gurry*, the offal of codfish, now obsolete, but by a euphuism represented in dictionaries as meaning "an alvine evacuation."

*Hackle* is used in two senses, and for two English words. The one is to cut in small notches, as to "hackle" the edge of the door. This is the same as the word to *hack*, defined "to cut irregularly, to notch with an imperfect instrument or in an unskilful manner." The other denotes the separating the coarse part of the flax from the fine, by passing it through the teeth of an instrument called in Northumberland and Yorkshire, a *hackle*, in Scotch, a *heckle*. Hence the word came to mean to handle roughly or to worry, particularly by annoying questions. In Newfoundland *hackle* and *cross-hackle* are specially applied to the questioning of a witness by a lawyer, when carried to a worrying degree.

*Haps*, to hasp or fasten a door. This was the original Anglo-Saxon form *hapse* or *haps*. It is defined by Johnson as a noun, a clasp folded over a staple and fastened on with a padlock, and as a verb, to fasten in this manner. Wright gives it as Berkshire for to fasten, and Devonshire for the lower part of a half door. In Newfoundland it denotes to fasten in general.

*Hacl*, a quantity, a bunch or a heap. A hat of trees means a clump of trees. According to Jamieson, in some parts of Scotland the word means a small heap of any kind carelessly thrown together.



*Helve* is the term universally used for an axe handle, and as a verb it denotes putting a handle to that implement.

*Heft* as a verb, to raise up, but especially to prove or try the weight of a thing by raising it, is marked in dictionaries as Provincial English and Colloquial United States, but it is still used in the same sense in Newfoundland. Thus one returning home with a good basket of fish may say to a friend "heft that,"—feel the weight of it. And so as a noun it is used with the relative meaning of weight.

*Houseplace*, the kitchen. In old English, according to Wright, it meant the hall, the first large room after entering the house. Halliwell explains it as denoting in a farm house, the kitchen or ordinary sitting room. It is still in ordinary use in Scotland.

*Jonnick*, in Newfoundland, means honest, but according to Wright, in the Northamptonshire dialect it means kind or hospitable.

*Killock*, an old English word used to denote a small anchor, partly of stone and partly of wood, still used by fishermen, but going out of use in favor of iron grapnels.

*Kilter*, regular order or condition, "out of kilter," disordered or disarranged. It is common in old English, but generally spelled *kelter*. Thus Barrow says, "If the organs of prayer be *out of kelter*, or out of tune, how can we pray?" Under the spelling "*kilter*," it is common in New England.

*Knap*, a knoll or protuberance above surrounding land. It appears in Anglo-Saxon as *knappe*, and in kindred languages as denoting a knob, or button, but in old English it denotes "the top of a hill or a rising ground" (Wright).

*Leary*, hungry, faint. This is the old English word *lear* or *leer*, in German *leer*, signifying empty or hollow, having its kindred noun *leeriness*.

"But at the first encounter downe he lay,  
The horse runs *leere* without the man."

—Harrington's *Ariosto*, XXXV. 64.

*Linney*, a small building erected against a bank or another building. In New England it is generally pronounced *linter*, or *lenter*. This is commonly regarded as a corruption of *lean to*. But Wright gives *linhay* as in the Westmoreland dialect denoting an open shed. In this form, also it appears in "*Lorna Doone*," a novel written in the Devonshire dialect.

*Liveyer*. This word is used particularly on the coast of Labrador, but also in Newfoundland, to denote a resident, in contrast with one visiting for fishing or other purposes. It simply seems the word *liver*, altered in the pronunciation. They treat the word *lover* in a similar way, calling it *loveyer*, as is done in some English provincial dialects. This, however, being from the Anglo-Saxon *lufian*, is nearer the original than the common form.

*Logy*, heavy and dull in respect of motion. Anglo-Saxon *luggan*, Dutch *logge*, a sluggard. In the United States the word is applied to men or animals, as a *logy* preacher or a *logy* horse. In Newfoundland, in like manner, they will speak of a *logy* vessel, a slow sailer, and in addition, when from want of wind a boat or vessel cannot get ahead or can only proceed slowly, they will speak of having a *logy* time.

*Lun*, a calm. This word exists in Scotch and northern English as *loun*. It also appears in Swedish as *lugn*, pronounced *lungn*, and in old Icelandic as *logn*, pronounced *loan*.

*Marebrowed*. The word *mare* in Anglo-Saxon means a demon or goblin, of which we have a survival in the word *nightmare*. But there is in Newfoundland another survival of it in the word *mare browed*, applied to a man whose eyebrows extend across his forehead, and who is dreaded as possessed of supernatural powers.

*Midered* or *moidered*, worried. In the latter form Halliwell gives it as provincial English for distracted.

*Mouch*, to play truant, and also applied to shirking work or duty. This is the same with the old English word, variously spelled *meech*, *meach* and *miche*, to lie hid or skulk, hence to cower or to be servilely humble or mean. The form *mouch* is still retained in the north of Ireland and is common in Scotland. I lately observed it as used by the tramps in New York to denote concealing or disguising one's self. I find it also used by school boys in some parts of Nova Scotia.

*Mundel*, a stick with a flat end for stirring meal when boiling for porridge. Wright gives it as used in Leicestershire as an instrument for washing potatoes, and he and Halliwell both give it as Northumberland, denoting a slice or stick used in making puddings. In Old Norse there is a word *möndull*, pronounced *mundull*, which means a handle, especially of a handmill, and the word is frequent in modern Icelandic.

*Nesh*, tender and delicate, used to describe one who cannot stand much cold or hard work. This is old English, but marked in the dictionaries as obsolete except in the midland counties of England; Halliwell adds Northumberland.

He was too *nesske* and she too *harde*.—Gower *C. A. V.*

It may be noted here that the people of Newfoundland use the word *twinly* with almost the same meaning. It is undoubtedly formed from twin like *twinling*, a diminutive, meaning a little twin, given by Wright as *twindling*.

*Nunch*, the refreshment men take with them on going to the woods. It is an old form of the word "lunch" as "nuncheon" for "luncheon" (Wright). But by others it is regarded, we think not so probably, as referring to noon, and meaning the refreshments that laborers partake of at that hour. Connected with this is the word *nunny bag* originally meaning a lunch bag, but now used in the general sense of a bag to carry all the articles necessary in travelling. They have also a very expressive word, though I am not sure that it is general, *nunny fudger*, denoting primarily a man who is thinking more of his dinner than of his work, hence generally a man who looks out for his own interest.

*Patienate*, long suffering. Wright gives it as used in Westmoreland in the same sense.

*Peek*, to peep, common in New England.

*Perney*, an adverb meaning presently or directly, as when a servant told to go and do a thing might reply "I will *perney*." The word I do not find in any dictionary to which I have access, but from cognate words I believe that it has come down from the old English. Related to it is the Latin adjective *pernix*, quick, nimble, active, and the old English word *pernicious*, signifying quick. Thus Milton:—

Pert incentive reed

Provide *pernicious* with one touch of fire.

*Paradise Lost*, vi. 520.

Hence the noun *pernicity*, swiftness of motion which lingered longer. "Endued with great swiftness or *pernicity*," Ray on the Creation, 1691.

*Piddle* or *peddle*, is used to describe dealing in a small way, without any reference to hawking or carrying goods round from house to house for sale. This was the old meaning of the word.

*Pook*, a hay cock. Wright gives it as in Westmoreland and Halliwell as in Somerset used in the same sense.

*Prong*, a hay or fish fork. This is the meaning given by Johnson, who does not mention it as denoting one tine of a fork. So Wright gives it as an old English word denoting a hay fork.

*Putter* along, an old English form still in use in New England for "potter," to walk languidly or to labor inefficiently.

*Quism*, a quaint saying or conundrum. In Anglo-Saxon from *cwethan* to say comes *cwiss* a saying.

The Newfoundlanders have also the word *quisitize*, to ask questions of one, but it seems to be of different origin.

*Rampike*, a dead spruce or pine tree still standing. It is used in the same sense by the woodsmen of the Maritime Provinces, and probably of New England. It is probably the same as the old English word *rampick*, an adjective, "applied to the bough of a tree, which has lesser branches standing out at its extremity," (Wright).

*Ramshorn*, a wooden pound for washing fish in. But Wright gives it as a Somerset word denoting a sort of net to enclose fish that come in with the tide. So Halliwell.

*Randy* is used both as a noun and a verb, of the amusement of coasting. "Give us a randy" or "the boys are randying." In Anglo-Saxon it means boisterous, and "on the randy" meant living in debauchery. The word is retained in Scotland, where it means a romp or frolic, but generally in an unfavorable sense.

*Roke* or *roak*, smoke or vapor (Anglo-Saxon, *reocan*, to smoke), the same as reek in old English and Scotch. Thus Shakespeare:

"Her face doth reek and smoke."—*Venus and Adonis*, 555.

Still used poetically

"Culloden shall reek with the blood of the brave."—*Campbell*.

*Robustious*, is an old English word used by Milton, the same in meaning as *robust*, originally used in a favorable sense, but coming to mean violent and unruly. Hence it became a term of reproach, and finally fell out of use. But the Newfoundlanders still use it, or the similar word *robustic*, in its original favorable signification.

*Ruotions*. This word is used in Newfoundland to denote noisy quarrellings. I had supposed that it was Irish and a corruption of insur-



rections. But Halliwell gives it as Westmoreland for an uproar, so that it is probably old English.

*Scred*, a piece or fragment. It seems the same as "shred," the Anglo-Saxon *screade*. Webster gives Provincial English *screed*.

*Seeming*, judgment or opinion. Given in dictionaries as obsolete, but used by the best writers of the past. Thus Milton has

The persuasive words impregnd

With reason to her *seeming*.—*Paradise Lost*, ix. 738.

And Hooker says, "Nothing more clear than their *seeming*."

In Newfoundland, the sled or sleigh of the continent, the sledge of the English, is called a *slide*, but according to Wright this is the original form in old English. So *shard* is used as in Shakspeare's time and as still in some Provincial dialects of England to denote broken pieces of pottery.

*Spancel*, as a noun, denoting "a rope to tie a cows hind legs" and as a verb to "tie with a rope." In the dictionaries it is given as Provincial English and an English gentleman informs me that the word is still in common use in Yorkshire.

*Spell* from Anglo-Saxon *spelian* means in old English, as a verb, to supply the place of another, or to take a turn of work with him, and as a noun, the relief afforded by one taking the place of another at work for a time. In a similar sense it is used in Newfoundland. A Newfoundlander speaking of seals as swiles was asked how they spelled the word, replied, "We don't spell them, we generally haul them." It is however specially used to denote carrying on the back or shoulders. "He has just *spelled* a load of wood out," meaning he has carried it on his back. It is also applied to distance, as "How far did you carry that load," Answer, "Three shoulders *spells*," meaning as far as one could carry without resting more than three times. In connection with this I may note that the word *turn* is used to denote what a man can carry. "He went into the country for a *turn* of good," that is as much as he can carry on his back. The Standard Dictionary mentions it as having the same meaning locally in the United States.

*Starve*, viz., with cold or frost. I have heard the same in Nova Scotia. Johnson gives it as a verb neuter, with one of its meanings "to be killed with cold," and as active with the meaning to "kill with cold" and quotes Milton's line,

From beds of raging fire to *starve* in ice.

Webster gives this meaning as common in England, but not in the United States, though he quotes W. Irving as writing "*starving* with cold as well as hunger."

*Strouters*, the outside piles of a wharf, which are larger and stronger than the inner ones which are called *shores*. According to Wright in the Somerset dialect it denotes anything that projects.

*Swinge*, a form of *singe*, pronounced obsolete, but preserved in various English Provincial dialects, is the only one heard here. It is an ancient if not the original form of the word. Thus Spencer says,

"The scorching flame sore *swinged* a'l his face."

*Till Tib's eve*, an old English expression equivalent to the "Greek Kalends," meaning never, is found here. The origin of the phrase is disputed. The word *Tib* is said to have been a corruption of the proper name Tabitha. If so the name of that good woman has been sadly profaned, for it came to signify a prostitute

"Every coistrel

That comes inquiring for his *tib*."—Shakespeare, *Pericles*.

But St. Tib is supposed by some to be a corruption of St. Ubes, which again is said to be a corruption of Setubal. This, however, gives no explanation of the meaning of the phrase, and there is really no saint of the name. To me the natural explanation seems to be, that from the utter unlikelihood of such a woman being canonized, persons would naturally refer to her festival, as a time that would never come.

*Tilt*, a log house such as lumbermen use; a rough temporary shelter, like a shanty in Canada, only instead of being built of logs laid horizontally one on the other, it is usually composed of spruce or fir wood placed vertically, and covered with bark. In Anglo-Saxon it appears as *telt* and *telde*, from *telden*, to cover. According to the dictionaries from Johnson, it is used to denote a tent, an awning or canopy, as over a boat.

*Troth plight*, one espoused or affianced. So Shakespeare

This your son-in-law

Is *troth plight* to your daughter.—*Winter's Tale*.

*Tussock*, a bunch or tuft of grass. It is marked in the dictionaries as obsolete, but it is still in use in Newfoundland to denote the matted tufts of grass found on the bogs.

*Yaffle*, an armful, applied especially to gathering up the fish which have been spread out to dry, a small yaffle denoting as many as can be

held in the two hands, and a large yaffie, expressing what a man would encircle with his arms. The word is also used as a verb, meaning to gather them up in this manner. The Standard Dictionary gives it as used locally in the United States in this last sense. But the Newfoundlanders do not limit it to this. They will speak of a yaffie, *e. g.*, of crannocks. Wright and Halliwell give it as used in Cornwall as a noun denoting an armful.

*Yarry*, early, wide awake, as a yarry man or a yarry woman. Wright and Halliwell give this word spelled *yary* as Kentish, meaning sharp, quick, ready. They, however, give *yare* as another word, though almost if not quite identical in meaning. They are closely related, appearing in Anglo-Saxon as *gearu* or *gearo*, and in kindred languages in various forms. In old English *yare* is used as an adjective meaning ready.

This Tereus let make his ships *yare*.—Chaucer. *Legend of Philomene*.

It is applied to persons meaning ready, quick.

Be *yare* in thy preparation.—Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, iii. 4.

And as an adverb, meaning quickly.

*Yare, yare*, good Iris, quick.—*Ibid.*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, v. 9.

It is well known that the word *girl* is not found in the Anglo-Saxon or other languages of the North of Europe, and that it only occurs in two places in the authorized English version of the bible, showing that at the time that version was made, it was only beginning to be introduced into England. In Newfoundland it is only where the people have been intermixed with persons from other quarters that it has come into use, and in more remote places it is perhaps not used yet, the word "maid" pronounced *m'yid* being generally employed instead.

The use of *to* as meaning this, as in to-day, to-night and to-morrow, is continued in *to year*, this year and *to once* at once.

I may also notice that they use the old form *un* or *on* in the composition of words denoting the negative, where present usage has *in* or *im*. Thus they say unproper or onproper, undecent, unlegal, &c.

There are also the remains of old English usage in their use of the pronouns. Thus every object is regarded as either masculine or feminine, and is spoken of as either "he" or "she." "It" seems only to be used where it has been acquired by intercourse with others. A man speaking of his head will say "he aches." Entering the court house I heard a witness asked to describe a codtrap. He immediately replied,

"*He* was about seventy five fathoms long," &c. Other objects are spoken of as "*she*," not only boats and vessels, but a locomotive. Of this old usage we have a remnant in the universal use of the feminine for ships.

Another old form still common is the use of the singular *thee* and *thou*, where now the plural *you* is commonly employed. With this is joined what is still common in parts of England, the use of the nominative for the objective, and to some extent the reverse.

Some peculiarities may be noticed also in the formation of the past tense of verbs. Thus the present *saw* becomes in the past *sove*, and *dive* in like manner *dove*. But the very general usage is to follow the old English practice of adding "ed." Thus they say *runned* for ran, *sied* for saw, *hurtet* for hurt, *fallet* for fell, *comet* for came, even *sen'd* for sent, and *goet* for went. This last however is true English, retained in Scotland in *gaed*, while *went* does not belong to the verb at all, but is the past of another verb to *wend*. More curious still is the use of *donet* for did or done. Perhaps however this is not common.

The use of the letter "a" as a prefix to participles or participial nouns to express on action still going on, is still retained, as a-walking, a-hunting, etc.

Again in some places there is retained in some words the sound of *e* at the end where it is now omitted in English. Thus "hand" and "hands" are pronounced as if written "hande" and "handes." This is old English. We find it in Coverdale's version of the Bible, Tyndale's New Testament, which however sometimes has "honde" and "hondes," and Cranmers.

A number of words written with *ay* and with most English speaking having the long sound of *a*, are in Newfoundland sounded as if written with a *g*. Thus they say *w'y*, *aw'y*, *pr'y*, *pr'yer*, *b'y*, for away, pray, prayer, bay. So *n'yebors* for neighbors. This pronunciation is still retained in Scotland, and R. Lowell refers to it as in Chaucer, and quotes it as an example of the *lastingness* of linguistic peculiarities.

In their names of objects of natural history we find the retention of a number of old English words. Thus whortleberries or blueberries are called *hurts*, nearly the same as the old English whurts or whorts, marked in the dictionaries as obsolete. Then they call a flea a *lop*, the Anglo-Saxon *loppe* from *lope* to leap, and wasps they call *waps*, which is the same with the Anglo-Saxon *waps* and the low German *wepsk*. A



large vicious fly is called a *stout*, but according to Wright and Halliwell this is the Westmoreland name for the gadfly. Then the snipe is called a *snite*, which is the old English form, "The witless woodcock and his neighbor *snite*." (Drayton's "Owl.") Earthworms are termed *yeases*, which Wright gives as Dorset-shire and Halliwell as Somerset.

II. I have next to notice words still in general use, but employed by Newfoundlanders in a peculiar sense, this being sometimes the original or primary signification.

Perhaps in this respect the stranger is most frequently struck by the use of the words *plant* and *planter*. Neither has any reference to cultivating the soil. A planter is a man who undertakes fishing on his own account, a sort of middleman between the merchants and the fishermen. He owns or charters a vessel, receive all the supplies from the merchants, hires the men, deals with them, superintends the fishing, and on his return deals with the merchants for the fruits of the adventure, and settles with the men for their respective shares.

To many the most singular instance of this kind will be the use of the term *bachelor* women. Yet, as in Newfoundland, it originally denoted an unmarried person of either sex.

He would keep you  
A *bachelor* still  
And keep you not alone without a husband  
But in a sickness.—Ben Jonson.

Scarcely less strange may appear the application of the term *barren* both to males and females. In the distribution of poor relief a complaint may be heard, "He is a barren man, and I have three children." So the word seems to have been understood by the translators of King James's version of the Bible. Deut. vii. 14: "There shall not be male or female barren among you."

*Boughten*, applied to an article, is used to signify that it has not been manufactured at home. The same use of the word was common in New England.

*Bread* with a Newfoundlander means hard biscuit, and soft baked bread is called *loaf*. The origin of this is easily understood. For a length of time the coast was frequented by fishermen, who made no permanent settlement on shore, and whose only bread was hard biscuit. In a similar way fish came to mean codfish.

*Bridge*, pronounced *brulge*, is the word commonly used to denote a platform, though the latter word is known or coming into use, but they generally pronounce it *flatform*.

*Brief*. A curious use of the word *brief* is to describe a disease which quickly proves fatal. "The diphtheria was very brief there," that is, it quickly ran its course; the person died of it.

In several dictionaries (Standard, Halliwell, Webster, etc.,) this word is given as meaning "rife, common, prevalent," and is represented as specially applied to epidemic diseases. They also refer to Shakespeare as authority without giving quotations. Bartlett represents it as much used in this sense by the uneducated in the interior of New England and Virginia. Murray, in the New English Dictionary, gives the same meaning, but doubtingly, for he adds, "The origin of this sense is not clear. The Shakespearean quotation is generally cited as an example, but is by no means certain." I presume to think that the assigning this meaning is altogether a mistake. By no rule of language can *brief* be made to mean rife. We see at once, however, the expressiveness of the word as applied in the Newfoundland sense to an epidemic as making short work of its victims. I must regard this, therefore, as the original meaning of the word in this application. At the same time we can see how the mistake may have arisen. An epidemic disease so malignant as to prove fatal quickly could scarcely but become prevalent where introduced, and its prevalence being on the minds of men, they would be apt to attach such a meaning to the description of its working, as *brief*, and then use the word in that sense.

Similar to this is the use of the word *late*, applied to a woman lately married. "The late Mrs. Prince visited us," meaning the lady who had recently become Mrs. Prince.

*Chastise* is used not as particularly meaning to punish either corporally or otherwise, but to train for good. A father will ask the person to whom he is intrusting his son to chastise him well, meaning merely bring him up in a good way. But the more limited signification is coming into use.

The word *clever* it is well known is used in different senses in England and New England. In the former it expresses mental power, and means talented or skillful; in the latter it describes the disposition and means generous or good-natured. In Newfoundland it is used in quite a distinct sense. It there means large and handsome. It is

applied not only to men, but to animals and inanimate things. A fisherman will speak of a "clever built boat," meaning that it is large and shapely. The dictionaries from Johnson onward give as one meaning of the word "well shaped or handsome." But he describes it as "a low word scarcely ever used but in burlesque or in conversation and applied to anything a man likes, without a settled meaning." Wright gives it as in the east of England meaning good looking and in Lancashire as denoting lusty, which when applied to men is nearly the Newfoundland idea, and probably the nearest to the old English.

*Crap*, commonly pronounced *crap*, the personal equipment of a man going on a sealing voyage supplied by the merchants but distinct from the provisions, etc.

*Draft* or *draught* in old English and still in the provinces means a team of horses or oxen, and also that drawn by them, a load. As the Newfoundlanders generally had no teams, they have come to use it to denote a load for two men to carry, hence two quantals of fish.

*Dredge* pronounced in Newfoundland *drudge*, is used to denote the sprinkling of salt over herring when caught, and mixing them together, to preserve them in the meantime. It is the same word that is used in cooking to denote sprinkling flour on meat for which we still have the *dredging box*. Skeat (Etym. Dictionary) gives a general meaning to sprinkle as in sowing *dreg*, *dredge*, mixed corn, oats and barley.

In connection with this they have the *dredge barrow* pronounced *drudge barrow*, a barrow with handles and a trough to hold salt, for carrying the fish from the boat to the splitting table.

*Driver* is the old English word for a four cornered fore and aft sail attached to the mizenmast of a vessel, now usually known as the spanker. It is now used in Newfoundland to denote a small sail at the stern of their fishing punts or boats. The rig I am informed was common among the fishermen of England and Jersey.

*Drung'd* or *drunge'd* equivalent to thronged of which it is probably a corruption.

*Duckies*. Twilight is expressed as "between the *duckies*," an expression which seems to resemble the Hebrew phrase "between the two evenings." So *duckish* meaning dark or gloomy, which Wright and Halliwell give as Dorsetshire for twilight. We may add here that the break of day is expressed as the *crack of the daanin*.

The word *fodder* is not used to denote cattle feed in general, but is limited to oats cut green to be used for that purpose. This use of the word I am informed is found in New England. So the words *funnel* and *funnelling* are used in Newfoundland and also in some parts of the United States for stove pipe. It is common in both to hear such expressions as that "the funnels are wrong" or "he bought so many feet of funnelling." This sense of the word has gone out of use elsewhere, except as regards a steamer's funnel.

*Hatchet* is used for an axe. This is a little singular as the word was not originally English, but is the French *hachette*, the diminutive of *hache*, and really meaning a small axe or hatchet.

*Idle* is used to mean wicked, expressing the full force of Watts' lines, that "Satan find some mischief still, fo. idle hands to do."

A Newfoundlander cannot pass you a higher compliment than to say you are a *knowledgable* man. The word, however, I understand is common in Ireland, and I suppose was brought here by the Irish settlers.

*Lodge* is used in an active transitive sense, as equivalent to place or put, as "I lodged the book on the shelf," "She lodged the dish in the closet."

*Lolly*. This word is used by Newfoundlanders, as by the people on the northern coast of America, and by Arctic explorers, to denote ice broken up into small pieces. They have, however, another use of the word, so far as I know, peculiar to themselves, that is, to express a calm. In this respect it seems related to the word *lull*. Indeed, Judge Bennett thinks that it should be written *lully*.

*Lot*, the same as allot, to forecast some future event. Wright and Halliwell give it as Westmoreland for imagine, and the Standard Dictionary represents it as used in the United States as meaning to count upon, to pleasantly anticipate. The word *low*, which I deem a contraction of allow, is used in virtually the same sense. "I low the wind will be to the eastward before morning." The word allow is used in some parts of Nova Scotia as meaning intention or opinion. "I allow to go to town to-morrow." The Standard Dictionary represents it as colloquially used in this sense in the United States, particularly in the Southern States.

*Main* is used as an adverb, meaning very, exceedingly. A Newfoundlander will say, "I am *main* sorry," that is, exceedingly sorry.

This use of the word still appears in various provincial dialects of England. The word *fair* is also used in much the same way.

*Marsh* often pronounced *mesh* or *mish* is the usual name for a bog, of which there are many, and some of them very extensive through the island. So *pond* is the name for a lake. Even the largest on the island (fifty-six miles long) is known as Grand Pond. The usage prevails to some extent in New England, where however both terms are used without any clear distinction between them, but in Newfoundland "pond" alone is used. In this connexion, it may be also noted that a rapid in a river is usually known as a *rattle*, a term which I have not found elsewhere, but which I regard as very expressive.

*Model*, sometimes pronounced *morel*, is used in general for a pattern. Thus a person entering a shop asked for "cloth of that model," exhibiting a small piece.

*Nippers*, half mitts or half gloves used to protect the fingers in hauling the cod-lines.

The word *ordain* is in common use, and is applied to matters in ordinary business of life. Thus a man will say, "I *ordained* that piece of wood for an axe helve." This seems to be the retention of its original use, before it came to be set apart for the more solemn objects to which it is now applied. Similar to this is its use in Devonshire, according to Wright and Halliwell, as meaning to order or to intend.

The word *proper* is in very common use to describe a handsome well-built man. This is old English usage, as in Heb. xi. 23: "He was a *proper* child." So in Scotch—

Still my delight is with *proper* young men.—Burns, *Jolly Beggars*.

*Resolute* is used in the sense of resolved. "I am *resolute* to go up the bay next week," meaning simply that I have made up my mind to that step. This was the original meaning of the word, but the transition was easy to its expressing a spirit of determination, boldness, or firmness. But it has come to have another meaning at least in some places, that of determined wickedness.

The word *ridiculous* is used to describe unfair or shameful treatment without any idea of the ludicrous. "I have been served most ridiculous by the poor commissioner," was the statement of a man who wished to express in strong terms his sense of the usage he had received. Halliwell says that in some counties in England it is used to denote some-



thing very indecent and improper. Thus, a violent attack on a woman's chastity is called very ridiculous behavior, and an ill-conducted house may be described as a very ridiculous one.

*Rind* as a noun is invariably used to denote the bark of a tree and as a verb to strip it off. The word *bark* on the other hand is only used as a noun to denote the tan which the fisherman applies to his net and sails, and as a verb to denote such an application of it. Thus he will say, "I have been getting some juniper or black spruce *rind* to make tan *bark*," or "I have been *barking* my net or sails," meaning that he has been applying the tannin extract to them.

One of the most singular peculiarities however of the dialect of Newfoundland, is the use of the word *room* to denote the whole premises of a merchant, planter, or fisherman. On the principal harbors, the land on the shore was granted in small plots measuring so many yards in front, and running back two or three hundred yards with a lane between. Each of these allotments was called a *room*, and according to the way in which it was employed, was known as a merchant's room, a planter's room, or a fisherman's room. Thus we will hear of Mr. M's. upper room, his lower room or his beach room, or we have Mr. H.'s room, the place where he does business, at Labrador. One of these places descending from father to son will be called a family room.

*Shall*, probably the same as *shell*, but we find it as *shale* used by older writers. Johnson defines it as "a husk, the case of seeds in siliquous plants," quoting Shakspeare's line "leaving them but the shales and husks of men," and Halliwell gives it as a noun meaning "a husk" and as a verb "to husk or shell as peas."

The word *skipper* is in universal use and so commonly applied, as almost to have lost its original meaning of master of a small vessel. It is used toward every person whom one wishes to address with respect, and is almost as common as "Mr." is elsewhere. Generally the christian name is used after it, as skipper Jan, skipper Kish. In like manner the word *uncle* is used without regard to relationship. In a community every respectable man of say sixty years of age will be so called by all the other people in it.

*Smoochin*, hair-oil, or pomade. A young man from abroad, commencing as clerk in an establishment at one of the outposts, was puzzled by an order for a "pen'orth of smoochin." The verb *smooch* is also used as equivalent to smutch, to blacken or defile. We may hear such

expressions as, "His clothes are smooched with soot," or "The paper is smooched with ink." But it is also used to express the application of any substance as by smearing, without any reference to blackening. Thus one might say, "Her hair was all smooched with oil."

*Spurt*, a short time. "Excuse me for a spurt." "How long did you stay? Only a short *spurt*."

The term *trader* is limited to a person visiting a place to trade, in contrast with the resident merchants.

The mistress of a household disturbed in the midst of her house-cleaning will describe herself as *all in an uproar*. The word now denotes *noisy* tumult. But it originally meant simply confusion or excitement.

His eye

Unto a greater *uproar* tempts his veins."

—Shakspeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 4, 27.

Halliwell gives it as in Westmoreland meaning confusion or disorder, and so a Newfoundland lady uses it. But she has quite a vocabulary to express the same thing. She has her choice among such phrases as *all in a reeraw*, *all in a floption*, or *all of a rookery*. The last word, however, is given by Wright and Halliwell, as in the south of England, denoting a disturbance or scolding.

The word *weather*, besides the usual nautical uses to signify to sail to windward of, or to bear up under and come through, as a storm, is used to signify foul weather, or storm and tempest, according to an old meaning, now marked as obsolete, or only used in poetry. Thus Dryden

"What gusts of *weather* from that darkening cloud  
My thoughts portend."

I have observed also that some words are used in the same sense as in Scotch. This is seen in the use of the preposition *into* for *in*. "There is nothing *into* the man," or as the Scotch would say "*intill* him." So *aneist*, meaning near or nearest. Then the word *vex* is used to denote sorrow or grief rather than worry. "I am *vexed* for that poor man," a Newfoundlander or a Scotchman would say, though I judge that it expresses grief arising to such a degree as deeply to disturb the mind. It is used in the same sense by Shakspeare.

"A sight to *vex* the fathers soul withal."—*Titus Andronicus*, V. 1.

In one passage of the authorized version of the Bible (Isa. lxiii. 10) it is used to translate a Hebrew word everywhere else rendered grieve. So

the words *fine* and *finely* to mean very much or very good. "We enjoyed ourselves *fine*." "How are you to-day? O I'm *fine*." "He is doing *finely*." This usage could not have been acquired by intercourse with Scotch, as there are very few such on the island out of St. Johns. The last two words are from the Latin and come into Old English through the French, from which the use must have been separately derived.

III. I would now notice a number of words and phrases of a miscellaneous character, that have been introduced in various ways, or have arisen among the people through the circumstances of their lives.

I have already mentioned that though a large proportion of the population are of Irish descent, so as to affect the accent of the present generation, yet their dialect draws few words from this source. There are, however, some such. Thus we can scarcely mistake the origin of the use of the term *entirely* at the end of a sentence to give force to it. Then *path*, pronounced with the hard Irish *th*, was applied to a road or even the streets of a town. Not long ago one might hear in St. Johns of the "lower *pat-h*" or the "upper *pat-h*." So the use of the term *gaffer*, a contraction of *granfer*, itself a corruption of *grandfather*, as applied to children only, must have been derived from Ireland, in some parts of which it is common. From that quarter also came, if I mistake not, the use of the term *boys* in addressing men. It is used indeed to some extent elsewhere. English commanders, either of vessels or soldiers, use it when addressing their men in affectionate familiarity. Shakespeare also has it: "Then to sea, boys," "Tempest," II. 2. But the usage is specially characteristic of the Irish, and in Newfoundland it is universal, in whatever men are employed, whether on board a vessel or working on land. I believe that the use of the word *rock*, to denote a stone of any size, even a pebble thrown by a boy, which is universal in this island, is from the same quarter.

From the long time that the French have been fishing on this coast, we might have expected that the language of the residents would have received accessions from them. We find, however, only one or two words that we can trace to this source. Thus the word *pew*, an instrument consisting of a shaft with a sharp piece of iron like one prong of a fork at the end of it, used for throwing fish from the boats on to the stages, whence the verb to *pew*, to cast them up in this manner, seems to be the French word *pieu*, which is defined as meaning a stake or pale,

but which I am informed, is used by the French Canadians to denote a fork. On the west coast they have the word *Jackatar*, a corruption of *Jacque à terre*, Jack ashore, a name given to a Frenchman who has deserted his vessel and is living an unsettled life ashore, and indeed to any French Canadian from the St. Lawrence visiting that part of the island. The word *please* is used as an Englishman would say: "I beg your pardon, what did you say?" But this is simply the translation of the French *plait-il*.

We would scarcely have expected to find their speech set off by importations from the classics. But some words seem to be of Latin origin. In the prices current in the newspapers one may see fish distinguished as *tol squolls* or *tal squals* and quoted at certain figures. This denotes fish bought and sold without assorting or culling, just as they come. Dr Pilot suggests that the word is a corruption of the Latin *talis qualis*, such as it is, and it is likely that he is correct.

Another word which he regards as of classic origin is *longer*. This he supposes a contraction of the Latin *longurius*. I do not think it necessary to go beyond the English language to account for the formation of the word. At all events, it is used in Newfoundland to denote a pole, of length according to circumstances, stretched across an open space. Thus they have *flake longers*, the horizontal pieces in flakes, on which boughs are laid to form the bed on which fish are placed to dry; *fence longers*, small sized fence rails; and *stage longers*, of larger size, from five to seven inches in diameter, forming the floor or platform of the fishing stage.

There is another word in common use, which seems to me to have a Latin origin, that is *quiddaments*, which means the things necessary in travelling. To me it seems simply a corruption of *impedimenta*, which meant exactly the same thing, though others prefer deducing it from the word *accoutrements*.

It will be seen that several of the old English words in use in Newfoundland are also found in New England. The question has been raised whether each derived them from their common English parentage, or whether the Newfoundlanders received them by intercourse with New England fishermen visiting their coast. I am decidedly of opinion that most if not all the words of this stamp used in Newfoundland were an original importation from the mother country. The intercourse of New England fishermen was too limited and too transient to have so

generally affected their language. Still there are a few words in use which seem to have come in that way, for example, *callibogus*, a mixture of spruce beer and rum; a *scalawag*, a scamp; *tomahawk*, the name by which the American shingling hatchet is known; *catamaran*, a word originally denoting a raft of three logs lashed together, used first in the East and afterwards in the West Indies; but in Newfoundland used to denote a woodshed, and when side sleighs were first introduced, applied to them; and *scrod*, in New England *escrod*, a fresh young codfish boiled.

There is a word common in names on the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador to which I must advert. It is the word *tickle*, used to denote a narrow passage of some length, usually between an island and the mainland, sometimes large enough to afford shelter for vessels, and sometimes so small as to be navigable only by boats. On the east coast of Newfoundland there are six or eight such places, known by particular appellations, as North Tickle, Main Tickle, &c., and the Coast Pilot notes over a dozen such places on the Labrador coast. We have other names formed from them as Tickle Point or Tickle Bay. In two or three instances in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick we have such a place known sometimes as a *tickle*, but commonly as a *tittle*, which I deem a corruption of it. I have never seen a conjecture as to the meaning or origin of the word, but myself proposed the following explanation.\* The first explorers of the coast referred to were the Portuguese, who gave names to the leading places on these shores, a number of which remain to the present day. A large proportion of these were the names of places in Portugal or the Western Islands, from which they carried on much of their trade. Now on the coast of Portugal may be seen a point called Santa Tekla. It is a narrow projection some miles in length, inside of which is a lengthy basin, narrowed by an island. As there were few good harbors on the coast of that country, this formed a favorite resort for shelter, particularly to her fishermen. What more natural than that they should give the name to places here of similar appearance and serving the same purpose. The slight change from Tekla to Tickle will not appear strange to any person who knows into what different forms foreign words have been changed when adopted by Englishmen.

\* Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, VIII. (2). 144.



IV. From the population of Newfoundland being so generally a seafaring people, they have in use many technical terms connected with nautical life. Some of these are common with English sailors. Thus they have the word *lobscouse*, originally *lobscourse*, as in Peregrine Pickle, still farther contracted into *souse*, a sailor's dish, consisting of salt meat, stewed with vegetables and ship's biscuits. To this they give the name *scoff*, which seems to be related to the verb *scoff*, given as a slang nautical term, meaning to eat voraciously (see Standard Dictionary).

An odd phrase among them is *Solomon Goss's birthday*. It is applied to Tuesdays and Fridays as pudding days, when at the seal or cod fishing. What is the origin of it, or whether it is peculiar to the people of Newfoundland, I cannot ascertain.

But I would specially note the technical terms connected with their fishing. From the intercourse which has taken place for over two centuries between fishermen in Newfoundland and those of the adjoining coasts of America, and even between them and those of European nations; it was natural that the same terms should be used among them, though some seem to be peculiar to Newfoundland or are there used in a peculiar way.

Thus *flaik* or *flake* is an old English word for a paling or hurdle. In old Icelandic it appears as *flaki* or *fleki* especially a hurdle or shield of wicker work, used for defence in battle (Vigfussen Icel. Dictionary). Webster gives it as "Massachusetts for a platform of slats of wands or hurdles, supported by stanchions, for drying fish." But it has long been used in this sense in Newfoundland, and the adjoining coasts of British America, and it is now admitted into the dictionaries as a good English word.

A curious custom is described in the phrase a *press pile compass*. A *press pile* is fish piled up to make, and a *press pile compass* is a trick played on a green hand of sending him to the next neighbor to borrow the *press pile compass*. The party applied to has not one to spare and sends him to the next, and so on as on April fool's day.

The fishermen of Newfoundland have a fishing-boat known as a *jack*, said to be peculiar to that island. It is from seven to fifteen tons' burden. The deck has open standing spaces forward and aft for the fishermen to stand in while they fish. The deck is formed of movable boards. It is schooner-rigged, but without either fore or main boom. The foresail is trimmed aft by a sheet, and the mainsail trimmed aft to

horns or pieces of wood projecting from the quarters. It thus avoids the danger of either of the booms knocking the fishermen overboard. I cannot ascertain the origin of the name, but it is believed that it was brought from either England or Ireland.

Among the curious words connected with their fishing I would farther note the following : *downer*, a heavy squall of wind ; *sunker*, a breaker ; *roughery*, a heavy sea on ; *collar*, a mooring laid down for the purpose of fastening the fishing punt or craft to it, the rope has a loop at the end for pulling over the stern of the boat, and this gives its name to the mooring ; *faggots*, small piles of fish on the flakes ; *high rat*, a boat with a board along the edge to prevent the water coming over, called a *washboard*, a term applied to objects which have a similar arrangement ; thus a man boarding in town complained that he had to sleep in a bed without any washboard ; *rode*, the hemp cable by which the vessel, boat or punt rides on the fishing ground and *waterhorse*, a pile of fish after having been washed, usually three or four feet wide, about the same height, and as long as may be.

*Voyage*, is used to express not their passage from one place to another, but the result of their trip. A good voyage is one in which they have been successful in their object whether fishing or trading and a bad voyage the reverse.

From their fishing seems also to have come the use of the word *sign* in the phrase, "a sign of" to express a small quantity. One at table being asked if he would have any more of a certain dish replied, "just a sign." When after reaching the fishing grounds and seeking spots where fish were to be found, they first caught some, it afforded a *sign* of their presence, just as a gold miner speaks of a "show" of gold. When they caught them in greater abundance they spoke of having "a good sign of fish." Hence the term I believe came to be applied generally to denote a small quantity.

Being so much dependent on the weather, as might be expected they have peculiar words and expressions regarding it. Thus a calm day is *civil* and a stormy one is *coarse*. This last is given by Halliwell as in various dialects of England, and it is also common in Scotland. A very sharp cutting wind driving small particles of congealed moisture, which cut the face in a painful manner, is expressively called a *barber*. On some of the coasts of the provinces, the term is applied to a vapor arising from the water in certain states of the atmosphere, and this sense is

given in the Standard Dictionary. In Newfoundland, however, I am assured it has always the idea connected with it of a cold wind driving the particles of ice in a way as it were to *shave* ones face.

They have also some peculiar names for the creatures coming under their notice. Thus the *medusae* or sea nettles are called *squid squads*, sometimes *squid squalls*, the echinus or sea urchin *oxeggs*, fresh water clams, *cocks and hens*, and to the westward smelts are known as *ministers*. The black fly is known as the *mosquito* and the mosquito as the *nipper*. The sea eagle they call the *grepe*. This seems unquestionably the same as *grebe*, but originally it represented certain kinds of water fowl. Then *stoat* is used for *shoat*, a young pig, and the American brown thrush or robin is called *the black bird*. We may add here that raisins are always known as *figs*, while figs are distinguished as *broad figs*.

But seal hunting is the industry peculiar to the island and in it has arisen a large number of terms, either specially applied or sometimes seemingly produced among themselves, to denote every object and act connected with it. We should observe however that with them a seal is always a *swile*, a sealing vessel or sealer, a *swiler* and seal hunting is *swile hunting*. This is an example, of which there are many others, of words being pronounced so differently as really to seem to be different words. Thus a hoe is a *how*, the fir is *var*, snuffing is *snoffing*, forked is *varket* and never is *naar*, which is equivalent to "not," "naar a bit" being a favorite expression to denote a strong negative.

Then they have a number of words not only to distinguish the species of seals, as *harps*, *hoods* and *dogheads*, but to mark the difference of age and condition. Thus the young or baby-seals till they leave the ice are known as *whitecoats*. When the pelt, that is the skin and fat together, does not weigh more than twenty-five pounds, it is called a *cat*, and a dwarf-seal, a fat little fellow, is called a *jar*.

The most curious use, however, of a word in this connection is that of *bedlamer*. The word originated with a class of vagabonds in the Middle Ages, known at first as "bedlam beggars," so called because when released from Bedlam hospital they were licensed to beg. They are referred to by Shakespeare as pilgrim beggars, but were commonly known as Toms o' Bedlam. They were also called *bedlamites* and *bedlamers*, which came to be generic terms for fools of all classes. The last is used in Newfoundland with two applications: (1) It denotes a seal one year old and half grown, which being immature is of little

value, and (2), it is applied rather contemptuously to young fellows between 16 and 20. Where we would apply to them such a term as hobbledoys, a Newfoundlander would always call them *bedlamers*. Judge Bennett says, "I have often had them so described in court. A policeman will say there were a lot of *bedlamers* standing at the corner, and accused was one of them," etc. There is sufficient resemblance between the two classes to account for the use of the same name, but how this came first to be applied to either does not appear.

Again for their work on the ice they have their own terms. Thus a cake of ice is uniformly known as a *pan* of ice, and to *pan* is to gather to one place a quantity say of seals. This last, however, seems a survival of an obsolete English word meaning to join or close together. Ice ground fine is known as *swish* or *sish* ice, but broken into larger pieces is called *slob ice*, to either of which also might be applied the term *lolly*, in common use on the North American coasts. When by the pressure of sea and storm the ice is piled in layers one upon the other, it is said to be *rafted*. Large cakes of ice floating about like small icebergs are called *growlers*. Through the melting of the part under water they lose their equilibrium, so that sometime even a little noise will cause them to turn over with a sound like a growl. Hence their name. Driven by high winds they acquire such momentum that they carry destruction to any vessel crossing their course. One year so many accidents occurred from them, that it was known as the year of the *growlers*. The process of separating the skin of the young seal with the fat attached is called *sculping*, and the part thus separated is known as the *sculp*. This is also known as the *pelt*, in seal hunting that term always including the fat attached, though in hunting on land it is used to denote the skin alone. To these we may add *swatching*, watching open holes in the ice for seals to come up to shoot them, simply a corruption of seal watching.

Being so much engaged with the sea, all their expressions are apt to be colored by life on that element. Thus a person going visiting will speak of going *cruising*, and girls coming to the mainland to hire as servants will talk of *shipping* for three months, or whatever time they propose to engage.

Independent of the sea, however, they have a number of words which seem to have been formed among themselves, some of which may be regarded as slang, but which are in common use. I notice the following,

*bangbelly*, a low and coarse word denoting a boiled pudding consisting of flour, molasses, soda, etc., and not uncommonly seal-fat instead of suet. I think we need hardly go searching for the origin of the name *chin* or *cheek music*, singing at dances, where they have no fiddle or accordeon, as often happens among the fishermen; *elecener*, given by Halliwell as in Sussex denoting a luncheon, but in Newfoundland meaning a glass of grog taken at eleven o'clock, when the sun is over the fore yard; *gum bean*, a chew of tobacco; *ear wipers*, flannel coverings for the ears in winter; *ramporous*, a sort of slang term, describing parties as very angry and excited, yet it seems well formed English, having its root-word *ramp*, and being kindred with *rampage*, *rampant*, *rampacious* or *rampageous*, with the last of which it is nearly synonymous; and *locksy*, regarded as a corruption of *look see*, but probably the first part is a form of the Anglo-Saxon *loke*, according to Halliwell, meaning to look upon, to guard, to take care of.

V. Lastly. There are a number of words, of which I am unable to trace the origin or relations. Thus a species of white bean is advertised commonly and sold under the name of *callivances*. Eggleston, in an article in the "Century Magazine" for 1894, mentions "gallivances and potatoes" as given in 1782 among the products of Pennsylvania, and in the same year, in "a complete discovery of the State of Carolina," a list is given of several sorts of pulse grown in the colony, "to wit, beans, pease, callavances," &c. He is puzzled about the word and supposes it to mean pumpkins, and to be from the Spanish *calabaza* (gourd). But they would not be pulse. Probably it meant there as it now does in Newfoundland, the small white bean, in contrast with the broad English bean. But what is the origin of the word, and how did it come to be found in places so distant and in circumstances so different as in Carolina and Newfoundland? And is it not singular to find it surviving in the latter when it has elsewhere disappeared so entirely, that the learned are unable to ascertain its meaning?

Of other words to me of unknown origin I note the following:—*babbage*, used to the northward to denote the plaiting of a snowshoe; *baiser*, applied by boys fishing, to a large trout; when such is caught, a common exclamation is, "Oh, that's a baisier;" *ballacarda*, or *ballaca-dar*, ice about the face, also ice along the foot of the cliff, touching the water; *chronic*, an old stump; *cockying* in Harbor Grace, *copying* in St. Johns, describing an amusement of boys in spring,



when the ice is breaking up, springing from cake to cake in supposed imitation of the seal hunters: *corel*, a tub made to hold blubber or oil; *cracky*, a little dog; *crannocks* on the west coast, *crunlocks* to the north, small pieces of wood for kindling fires; the *diddies*, the nightmare; *dido*, a bitch; *gandy*, the fisherman's name for a pancake; *dwy*, a mist or slight shower. "Is it going to rain to-day?" "No, its only a dwy," a Newfoundlander may reply. So a *snow dwy* denotes a slight fall of snow, which is not expected to come to much; *fawl* or *varl*, the cover of a book; *gly*, a sort of trap made with a barrel hoop, with net interwoven, and hook and bait attached, set afloat to catch gulls and other marine birds known as *ticklases* and *steerings*, but what species is meant by the last two names I have not ascertained; *jinker*, there is such a word in modern English, connected with jink, denoting a lively, sprightly girl, or a wag, but among the Newfoundlanders the word must have had a different origin, as with them it means an unlucky fellow, one who cannot or does not succeed in fishing; *old teaks* and *jannies*, boys and men who turn out in various disguises and carry on varicus pranks during the Christmas holidays, which last from 25th December to old Old Christmas day, 6th January; *matchy*, tainted, applied to salt beef or pork supplied to the fishermen; *pelm*, any light ashes, such as those from burnt cotton, cardboard, &c., also the light dust that arises from the ashes of wood and some kinds of coal; *scrape*, a rough road down the face of a bank or steep hill, used specially in regard to such as are formed by sliding or hauling logs down; *shimmick*, used on the west coast as a term of contempt for one who born of English parents, attempts to conceal or deny his birth in Newfoundland; *sprawls*, scil. of snow, heavy drifts; *sprayed*, describing chapped hands or arms; *starrigan*, a young tree, which is neither good for firewood, or large enough to be used as timber, hence applied with contempt to anything constructed of unsuitable materials; *tolt*, a solitary hill, usually somewhat conical, rising by itself above the surrounding country; *truckly muck*, a small two-handed car for dogs, with a handle for a man to keep it straight; *towntents*, pork cakes, made of pork chopped fine and mixed with flour; *tuckamore*, in some places *tuckamil*, a clump of spruce, growing almost flat on the ground, and matted together, found on the barrens and bleak exposed places; and *willigiggin*, half between a whisper and a giggle.

A large proportion of the people of Newfoundland being uneducated, persons trying to use fine English words often substitute one for another

somewhat alike in sound but totally different in meaning. Sometimes these are as ludicrous as any that have appeared under the name of Mrs. Partington. Dr. Pilot has given a number of instances of this kind, as *bigamous* for bigoted, meaning obstinate in his opinions, *circus court* for circuit court, *commodation* for recommendation, as for example, a servant's character. And we have heard a good janitor of a church having his feelings hurt by being obliged to use *antichrist* (anthracite) coal. Then there are words variously mangled in the pronunciation by the ignorant, as *dismolish* for demolish, and *nonsical* for nonsensical. Such a use of words is generally very limited, perhaps not extending beyond a single individual. In any case they are simply the blunders of the ignorant, and unless commonly adopted are of little interest to the student. Sometimes a word does thus come into use, as may be seen in the word *expensible* for expensive.

Like all uneducated people they have idiomatic phrases or a sort of proverbial expressions, often based on the circumstances of their daily life, which are frequently expressive. Thus they will describe a simpleton or greenhorn as *not well baked* or *only half baked*. They will also describe a similar character as having *a slate off*, indicating the same that is meant by a man having something wrong in his upper story. This saying was doubtless brought with them from the old country; but as slates are not used among them for the covering of houses, they have adapted the saying to the country by speaking of such a man as having *a shingle loose*. An increase of cold may be described as the weather being *a jacket colder* and when feeling its severity they speak of being *nipped with cold*. Again, a man describing his poverty said he had nothing to eat but *a bare-legged herring*, meaning a herring without anything to eat with it. So *stark naked tea* is tea without milk or sweetening, or *sweetness*, as the fishermen call it, molasses being known as *long sweetness* and sugar as *short sweetness*. To *put away a thing too choice* is to lay it aside so carefully as not to be able to find it. To *pay ones practice* is to pay the accustomed dues to the minister or doctor. *Over right* is for opposite or against. To *put your handsignment* is to sign your name. When a fisherman has a good catch of fish he has taken a *smart few*, but if he has met with only partial success he has only caught a *scattered few*, and if fish have been very scarce he will describe himself as getting only a *scattered one*. Quite an expressive phrase is *getting into*

*collar* to denote working on a ship preparatory to sailing either for seal or cod fishing. A curious one of which I can get no explanation is *she'd lick her cuff*, that is, submit to any humiliation, to be let go to a dance or secure what object she has in view. But one of the most amusing uses of a word is that of *miserable* simply as intensive. Thus a person will speak of a *miserable fine day*. Occasionally there is something poetic in their expressions, as when the land is described as just *mourning for manure*.

In these two papers I am far from having exhausted the subject, but I believe that they will be sufficient to show that in the peculiarities of Newfoundland speech we have an interesting field of inquiry. Here is a people living in a secluded position, but retaining words and forms of speech brought by their fathers from England, which elsewhere have passed away entirely, or are preserved only as provincialisms in some limited districts. In this quarter the study of these has been neglected hitherto. Persons laying claim to education have regarded them simply as vulgarisms, and have expressed some surprise that I should have deemed them worthy of thoughtful investigation. They could scarcely conceive that the rude speech of unlettered fishermen was really part of the language of Shakespeare, Milton and Chaucer. What I have done will, I trust, stimulate further enquiry, and that without delay. Education and intercourse with people of other lands will soon modify if not entirely wear away these peculiarities. It is to be hoped, therefore, that while the opportunity lasts there will be found among those having intercourse with them, persons to prosecute the inquiry farther, and to seek to gather the fullest information on a subject interesting in itself, but especially so as bearing on the past of our English mother-tongue.